

River 'Round Conservation Area

Ten Year Area Management Plan FY 2014-2023



Lisa B. Allen

Forestry Division Chief

8-27-14

Date

River 'Round Conservation Area Management Plan Approval Page

PLANNING TEAM

Raenhard Wesselschmidt, Wildlife Management Biologist

Jen Girondo, Fisheries Management Biologist

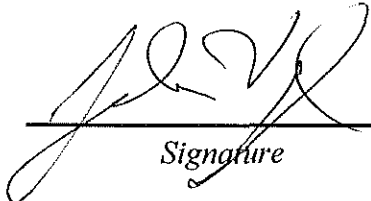
Gayle Todd, Resource Forester

Sam Faith, Conservation Education Consultant

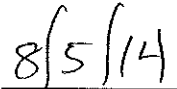
Todd Wright, Conservation Agent

ST LOUIS REGION

RCT Chair



Signature



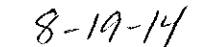
Date

FORESTRY DIVISION

Unit Chief



Signature



Date

OVERVIEW

- **Official Area Name:** River 'Round Conservation Area, # 7831
- **Year of Initial Acquisition:** 1978
- **Acreage:** 329.8 acres
- **County:** Franklin
- **Division with Administrative Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Division with Maintenance Responsibility:** Forestry
- **Statements of Purpose:**
 - A. Strategic Direction**

Manage for motor boat access to the Meramec River; and manage for wildlife with an emphasis on providing valuable riparian forest corridor for the Meramec River, upland forest/woodland habitat, and associated recreation opportunities.
 - B. Desired Future Condition**

The desired future condition of River 'Round Conservation Area (CA) is a forested river access along the Meramec River.
 - C. Federal Aid Statement**

N/A

GENERAL INFORMATION AND CONDITIONS

I. Special Considerations

- A. Priority Areas:** None
- B. Natural Area:** None

II. Important Natural Features and Resources

- A. Species of Conservation Concern:** Species of conservation concern are known from this area. Area Managers should consult the Natural Heritage Database annually and review all management activities with the Natural History Biologist.
- B. Caves:** Yes, records kept with MDC Natural History Biologist. Managers should follow the Cave Management policy found in the MDC Resource Policy Manual. All caves on this and other Conservation Areas are closed or restricted to public access. The fungus that causes White-nose Syndrome in bats has been documented in Missouri, resulting in the Missouri Department of Conservation's White-nose Syndrome Action Plan that limits public access to protect bats.
- C. Springs:** None
- D. Other:** Occurs in the East Meramec Oak Woodland/Forest Hills Landtype Association (LTA). This LTA consists of hilly, historically forested landscapes associated with stream valleys outside the principle range of shortleaf pine in the Ozarks (Nigh 2002).

III. Existing Infrastructure

- 1 parking lot (approximately 220' x 100')
- 1 boat ramp
- 1 entrance road (approximately 0.9 miles)
- 1 area access trail (approximately 1 mile)

IV. Area Restrictions or Limitations

- A. Deed restrictions or ownership considerations:** None.
- B. Federal Interest:** Federal funds may be used in the management of this land. Fish and wildlife agencies may not allow recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State is managing the land. Other uses may be acceptable and must be assessed in each specific situation.
- C. Easements:** Perpetual easement over existing road to portion of area acquired by MDC Deed # 1288 for the absolute right of ingress and egress according to instruments recorded in Book 333 page 918, Book 342 Pages 15-17, and Book 1246 Pages 540-541 in the records of Franklin County. Perpetual easement over existing road through portion of area acquired by MDC Deed # 2665 for the absolute right of ingress and egress according to instruments recorded in Book 333 page 918, Book 342 Pages 15-17, and Book 1246 Pages 540-541 in the records of Franklin County. Right of Way along Old Cove Road to Franklin County for roadway purposes according to copy of Conveyance of Right of Way located in MDC office with area file.
- D. Cultural resources findings:** Yes, records kept with MDC Environmental Compliance Specialist. Managers should follow Best Management Practices for Cultural Resources found in the MDC Resource Policy Manual.
- E. Hazards and hazardous materials:** None observed.
- F. Endangered species:** None observed.
- G. Boundary Issues:** None.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

V. Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations

River 'Round CA contains approximately 100 acres of open land and 170 acres of forest and woodland.

The forest and woodland on River 'Round CA occur on six ecological land types (ELTs) and can be described as follows (MDC GIS layer 2012):

- 1) Riverfront Forest
- 2) Oak-Mixed Hardwood Mesic Forest AND Mixed Oak Woodland
- 3) Dry Sandstone Glade and Woodland AND Mixed Oak Woodland
- 4) Post Oak Woodland
- 5) Limestone/Dolomite Woodland
- 6) Dry Limestone/Dolomite Glade and Woodland
- 7) The forest and woodland contain invasive species.

The open land on River 'Round CA can be described as follows:

- 1) Native Warm Season Grass Hay
- 2) Old Field
- 3) Food Plot

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Manage forest and woodland for wildlife, recreation and aquatic benefits.
- 2) Maintain open lands in accordance to a plan (to be developed) for reforestation some or all of the existing open land.

Management Objective 1: Manage open land habitat while phasing in development and implementation of reforestation plan.

Strategy 1: Develop and implement plan for reforestation some or all of the existing open lands. Plan will address which fields should be re-forested, what timeline they should be reforested under, and how they should be re-forested. It is anticipated that most or all open lands will be re-forested, but in a phased in manner based on available funding, existing Ag Crop contract requirements, and other considerations (Forestry/Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Utilize the Ag Crop program to provide grassland habitat through the use of haying on fields which are not identified for reforestation via Strategy 1, or in which reforestation has not yet occurred (Wildlife).

Strategy 3: Allow old fields to revert back to forest through succession and the use of tree plantings (Forestry).

Strategy 4: Maintain food plots in small grain crops through the use of bartered services until/unless determined otherwise in reforestation plan (Wildlife).

Strategy 5: Utilize the permittee farmer to monitor and treat open lands for invasive plant infestation, especially fescue, Johnson grass and sericea lespedeza (Wildlife).

Management Objective 2: Maintain riparian corridor for wildlife habitat and water quality.

Strategy 1: Maintain 2009 bottom field tree planting until trees overtop weeds (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Allow bottom field north of entrance road to continue to revert to trees (Forestry).

Strategy 3: Maintain existing riparian forest in a late successional state (Forestry).

Management Objective 3: Maintain forest and woodland for wildlife habitat and recreation.

Strategy 1: Maintain forest and woodland in a late successional state (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Invasive species may be reduced by prescribed burning, mechanical, or chemical methods as regional priorities and resources allow (Forestry).

Strategy 3: Prescribed burning, mechanical, or chemical methods may be used to maintain woodland habitat as regional priorities and resources allow (Forestry).

VI. Aquatic Resource Management Considerations

The main aquatic feature on River 'Round CA is 3.5 miles of one bank of the Meramec River. A rock bass (goggle-eye) Special Management Area exists on the adjacent portion of the Meramec River.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Rock bass (goggle-eye) fishery management in the Meramec River.
- 2) Riparian area management on the banks of the Meramec River.

Management Objective 1: Manage the rock bass (goggle-eye) fishery under an 8" minimum length limit.

Strategy 1: Ensure rock bass (goggle-eye) fishing minimum length limit signs are posted.

Management Objective 2: Manage the aquatic habitats and adjacent riparian areas to maintain or improve aquatic ecological functions.

Strategy 1: Managing divisions will maintain riparian corridors (see Terrestrial Resource Management Considerations – Objective 2).

VII. Public Use Management Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Provide motor boat access to the Meramec River.
- 2) Provide hunting opportunities.
- 3) Provide adequate parking space for area users (currently parking is limited).
- 4) Maintain boundaries to prevent trespass onto adjacent property.
- 5) Study the feasibility of developing a canoe launch.

Management Objective 1: Provide motor boat access to the Meramec River.

Strategy 1: Maintain entrance road, parking lot, and boat ramp to Department policy standards (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Monitor stream bank instability that may damage existing boat ramp.

Management Objective 2: Provide public hunting opportunities.

Strategy 1: Utilize the Ag Crop program to conduct annual management activities that will provide open land habitat as deemed appropriate in reforestation plan to be developed (Wildlife).

Strategy 2: Consider converting some if not all of the current open land habitat to woodland habitat to promote hunting of woodland species.

Management Objective 3: Expand parking area to the area north of the existing parking area and west and south of the entrance road to provide adequate parking space for area users.

Strategy 1: Propose a capital improvement project to expand parking area (Forestry).

Management Objective 4: Maintain boundaries.

Strategy 1: Sign boundaries as necessary to discourage trespass onto adjacent property (Forestry).

Strategy 2: Mark and maintain boundaries at seven year intervals (Forestry).

Management Objective 5: Study the feasibility of developing a canoe launch.

Strategy 1: Monitor effectiveness of parking lot expansion to curtail motor boat ramp blockage (Protection).

Strategy 2: Inspect bank area accessible from expanded parking lot for a suitable canoe launch location and provide recommendation on development (Fisheries).

Strategy 3: Provide specifications for development of canoe launch if there is a need identified in strategy 1 and a suitable site has been identified in strategy 2 (Design and Development).

Strategy 4: Submit a request for the development of a canoe launch as provided by Design and Development (Forestry).

VIII. Administrative Considerations

Challenges and Opportunities:

- 1) Maintain area infrastructure.
- 2) Acquisition of land.

Management Objective 1: Maintain area infrastructure.

Strategy 1: Maintain area infrastructure according to MDC guidelines and at currently identified maintenance level (2) (Forestry).

Management Objective 2: Acquisition of land

Strategy 1: When available, adjacent land may be considered for acquisition from willing sellers. Tracts that improve area access, provide public use opportunities, contain unique natural communities and/or species of conservation concern, or meet other Department priorities as identified in the annual Department land acquisition priorities may be considered.

MANAGEMENT TIMETABLE

Strategies are considered ongoing unless listed in the following table:

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APPENDICES

Area Background:

River 'Round Conservation Area is in Franklin County, about five miles east of St. Clair. The Conservation Department purchased the main portion of this area in 1978 to provide public access to the Meramec River. An additional 28 acres were purchased in 2000.

The 330-acre area is located in the Meramec River Hills subsection of the Ozark Highlands. The area is approximately 50 percent forested and 30 percent open not including roads, sandbars and river. Open areas have a history of crops, pasture, and building sites prior to Missouri Department of Conservation acquisition.

The area is open to the public from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Special facilities include a parking lot and a boat ramp.

Current Land and Water Types

| Land/Water Type | Acres | Miles | % of Area |
|-----------------|------------|-------|------------|
| Woodland | 170 | | 52 |
| Open land | 100 | | 30 |
| River/Sand bar | 50 | | 15 |
| Roads | 10 | | 3 |
| Total | 330 | | 100 |
| Stream Frontage | | 3.5 | |

Public Input Summary:

The draft River 'Round Conservation Area Management Plan was available for a public comment period April 1 – 30, 2014. The Missouri Department of Conservation received comments from four respondents (Appendix A). The River 'Round Conservation Area Planning Team carefully reviewed and considered these ideas as they finalized this document. A brief summary of public input themes, including how they were incorporated or why they were not, can be found below. Rather than respond to each individual comment, comments are grouped into general themes and are addressed collectively.

MDC responses to themes and issues identified through River 'Round Conservation Area public comment period

Concern with visitors parking at the top of boat ramp (blocking use).

Proposed expansion of the existing parking area would provide more space for vehicles to park away from the boat ramp. This is addressed in Public Use Management Objective 3.

Concern with float companies blocking boat ramp access and causing long wait times for other users.

Proposed expansion of the parking area and possible development of a separate canoe launch would redirect float company traffic away from the motor boat launch.

Suggests a separate canoe launch.

We will explore the feasibility of developing a separate canoe launch to alleviate blocking of the motor boat ramp.

Suggests development of an equestrian trail.

Development of an equestrian trail at this location is a low priority due to the strategic direction for the management of River 'Round which is to provide motor boat access to the Meramec River. Other sites with equestrian trails in the region include Little Indian Creek Conservation Area (Sullivan), Long Ridge Conservation Area (Sullivan), Meramec Conservation Area (Sullivan), Rockwoods Range (Wildwood), Forest 44 Conservation Area (High Ridge), Babler State Park (Chesterfield), Castlewood State Park (Ballwin), Route 66 State Park (Eureka) and Greensfelder Park (Saint Louis).

References:

Nigh, Timothy A. and Walter A. Schroeder. 2002. *Atlas of Missouri Ecoregions*.
Missouri Department of Conservation.

Maps:

Figure 1: Area Map

Figure 2: Aerial Map

Figure 3: Topographical Map

Figure 4: Current Vegetative Map

Additional Appendices:

Appendix A. Draft River 'Round Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Figure 1: Area Map

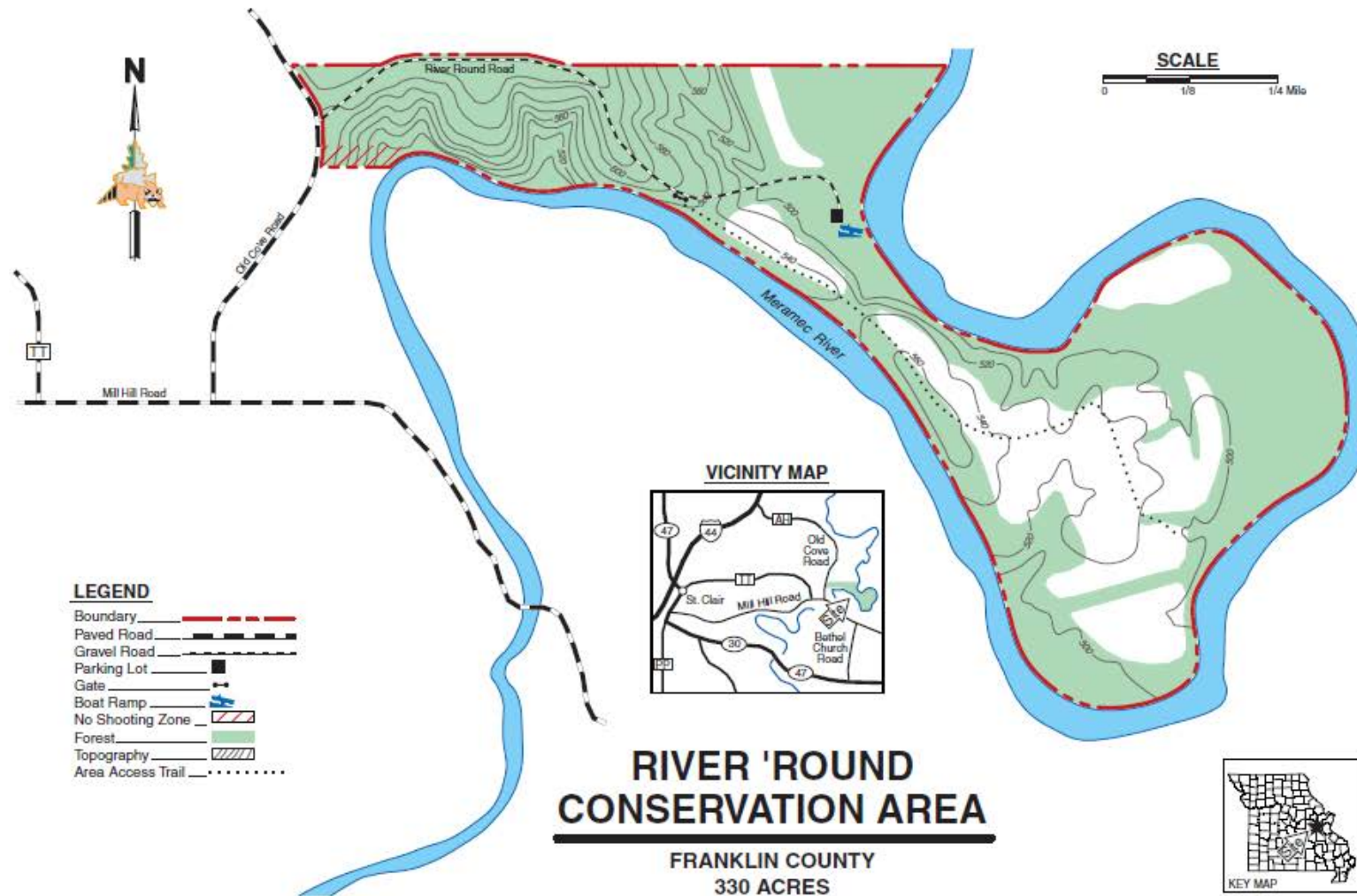


Figure 2: Aerial Map



Figure 3: Topographical Map

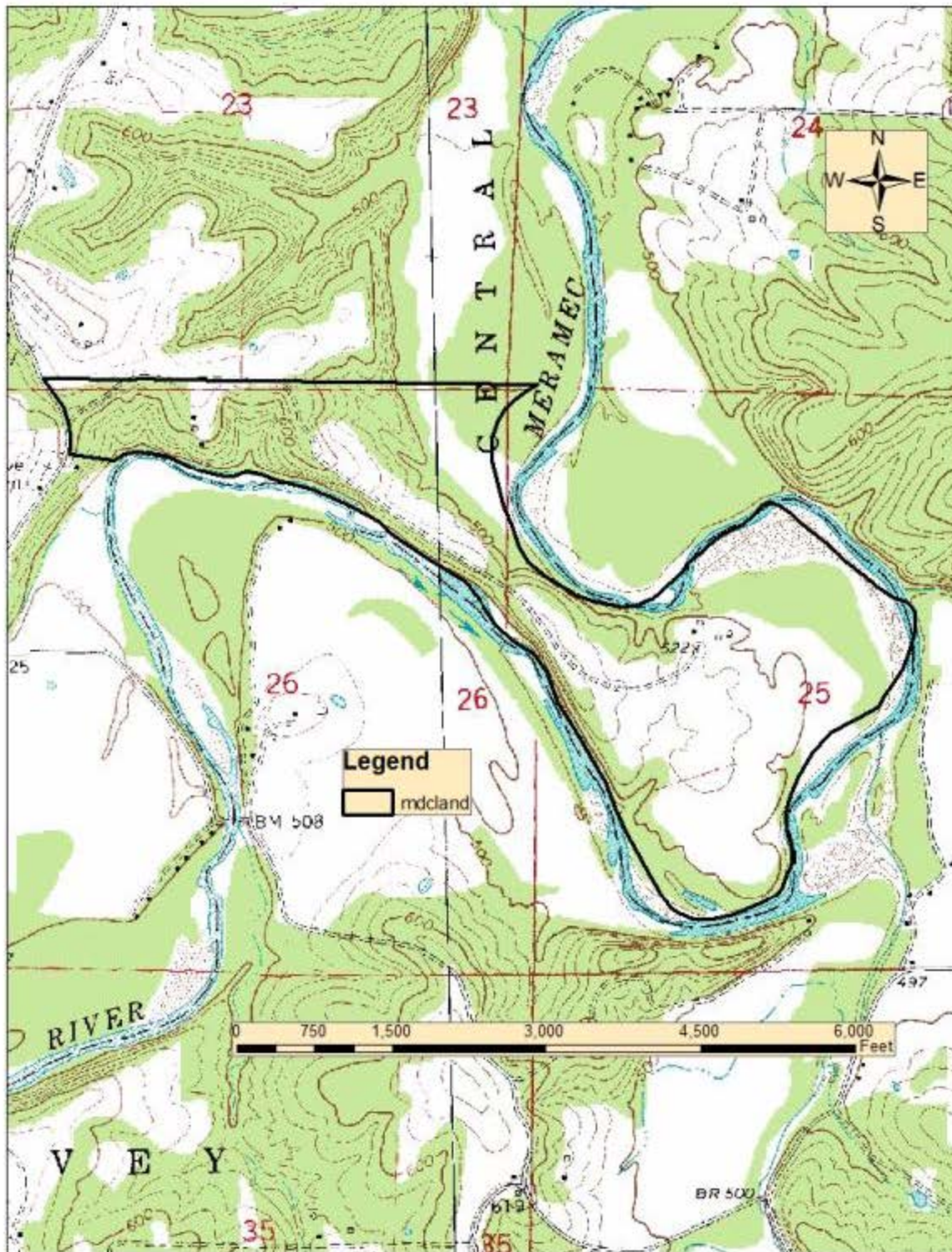
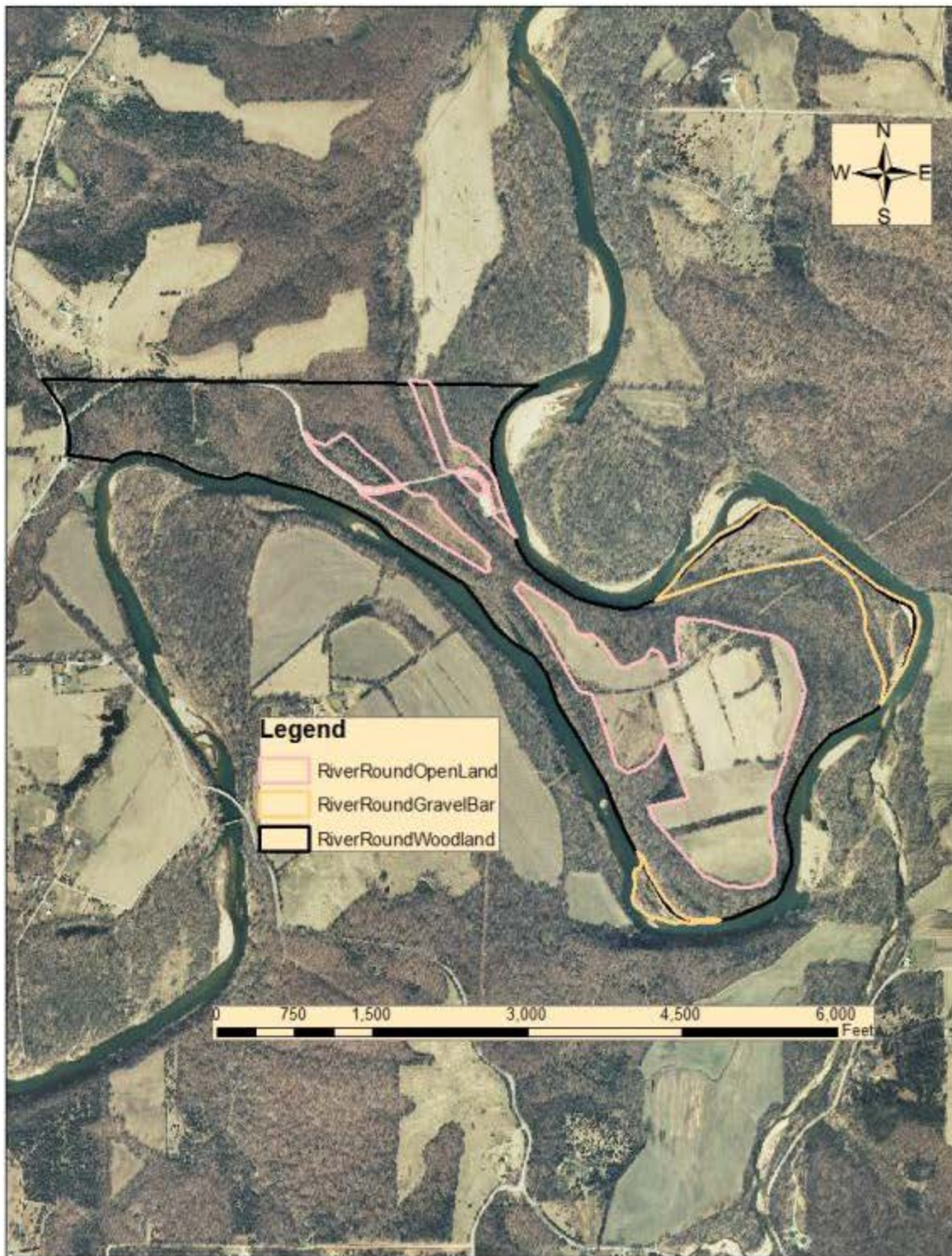


Figure 4: Current Vegetative Map



Appendix A. Draft River 'Round Conservation Area Management Plan Public Comments

Received during public comment period (April 1-30, 2014)

Under VII. Public Use Management Considerations Challenges and Opportunities, I would request that the Department develop a sandy or gravel area adjacent to the boat ramp an area for paddle boats(Kayaks and canoe) to launch so as not to block or get in the way of motor boats.

I like the plan you have as it is , my concerns are with commercial use of the property. Last year there was a float company tying up the boat ramp and the grass area at the top of the ramp. If there is going to be that kind of use the access needs to be more than the boat ramp so the float company's are not blocking the entire access.

I would like to see a trail developed here for hiking and equine use. I would be very interested in a equine trail, the nearest trails are Sullivan, or Stanton. Thanks for your time.

I use this boat ramp nearly every weekend during nice weather. I have two issues I would like to see progress with. One is the no parking at the top of the ramp, I wish there was a way to I force this issue because nearly every time I am there people park the which makes it difficult to back down the ramp. Second is the use of ramp for commercial gain. Old cove uses the ramp to put in there floaters. Many times thru the day on weekends it can be 20-30 min wait because of this. People buying permits to fish and hunt are helping to pay for these areas and not the people partying on float trips!

Thank you for listening.